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THE DUTY AND CHARACTER OF A GOSPEL BISHOP  
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A  
SERMON,  
PREACHED OCTOBER 30, 1805,  
AT THE  
ORDINATION  
OF THE  
REVEREND WILLIAM B. WESSON  
TO THE  
PASTORAL OFFICE  
OVER THE  
Church and Society  
IN  
*HARDWICK.*

---

BY JOSEPH LEE, A. M.  
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN ROYALSTON.

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*PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.*

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## ORDINATION SERMON.

TITUS i. 7.

*For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.*

THE great apostle Paul, whose business was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, not being able to tarry long at Crete, now Candia, where he had won many to the christian faith, left Titus there to set in order the things which were wanting, and ordain elders in every city where there were a competent number of believers. Soon after which, he wrote to him this epistle, to instruct him how to execute his trust.

As the establishment of stated teachers, in the several churches, was a matter of vast importance, the apostle, in the first place, gives him very particular advice and directions on this head.

It may be proper to observe here, that altho' Titus was directed to ordain elders, he did it not as a diocesan bishop, in virtue of authority appropriated to that office; but as an evangelist, and by power delegated from the apostle Paul, who had not leisure to do it himself. His mode of expression suggests this idea; For this cause left I thee in Crete;—to ordain elders. Titus, like Timothy, seems to have been an itinerant minister or evangelist, and not a stated pastor; and to have had no fixed relation to any church. Its being said, in the postscript to this epistle, that Titus was ordained first bishop of the Cretans, ought not to be considered as militating with this assertion, as that postscript was evidently written by another hand, and probably long after the epistle was sent.

It is plain, and seems now to be, generally, admitted, that bishop and presbyter, or elder are terms, promis-

cuously, used in the sacred writings; and that they mean precisely the same officer in the church, clothed with the same authority and dignity, and to whom the same duties are assigned. These terms are used in this promiscuous manner in our text and context. If by bishop, in the text, the apostle does not mean the same officer, as elder in the fifth verse, there is no pertinancy in his directions.

In the opinion of the apostle, the interest of christianity and the good of souls, require, that none but persons well qualified should be separated to the gospel ministry. He says much to this purpose in his epistles to Timothy and Titus: and considering the influence, which the character, the instructions and examples of public teachers have, in the church and world, it is very evident that those who introduce persons into the ministry, should proceed with great circumspection.

Viewing all ministers of the gospel as bishops, or overseers, our text obviously leads us to consider, the office and duty of a gospel minister, as the steward of God—the blamelessness which should form his character—with the importance of it.

We are then, first, to consider the office and duty of a gospel bishop, as the steward of God.

The gospel bishop is but a servant—he is the minister, that is, the servant of God and his people. Ministers are indeed stewards: Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.\* A steward is but a servant.

Altho' ministers be the servants of the people, it is for Christ, and to promote his cause and interest among them. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.†—The faithful performance of their duty, conduces to the secular good and peace of society; yet this is not the chief end of their service. Their business is not to promote the carnal, worldly and selfish views of people, but their spiritual edification in the truth, and in holiness of heart and life.

A steward, properly speaking, is a servant in a family under the direction and controul of its head, whose or-

\* 1 Cor. iv. 1.      † 2 Cor. iv. 7.

ders he is to observe, and to whom he is accountable. His business is to oversee affairs ; to seek the interest of his lord ; to dispense provision to the household and consult its welfare ; to direct the other servants ; and, by a wise, discreet and faithful management, to lead them to diligence and fidelity, in their respective departments.

Such a servant is the gospel bishop in the family of God ; appointed to take care of the honor and interest of his Lord—He has the oversight of the church—is to feed it by administering the word and ordinances of Christ ; is to guard it against error and delusion, and the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive—and in the whole course of his duty to be prudent, faithful, and exemplary to all the servants of Christ.

The steward of God is to oversee and distribute provision to the household of God, his church. Take heed to yourselves, said the apostle to the elders of the church at Ephesus, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, or bishops, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.\*

The church is to be fed with the word of truth. The truths taught in the scriptures, relating to the nature and perfections, the law and government, of God ; the fall and recovery of man by Jesus Christ, with the precepts the promises and threatnings, are the food, which is to be distributed to the family of God, to every one his portion.

By the law, sinners are to be convinced of their sinful, guilty and perishing condition, and of their infinite need of an almighty saviour. And by the gospel they are to be directed to Christ, as the true and living way to the Father ; as him through whose blood we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ; and whom they are always to regard as their light and wisdom, their righteousness and strength ; and of whom they may receive every thing necessary to their refreshment and comfort their nourishment and support, their present peace and final salvation. I am, said Jesus, the bread of life.

\* Acts\_xx. 28.

As his Lord's representative, the gospel steward is to act in the name, and by the authority of Christ. In teaching, and in administering holy ordinances, he is to display the grace and love, the care and tenderness of Christ, towards his church and people. To do this, with advantage and success, he must attend to the state of the flock, and the wants of its members; that a word of instruction, exhortation and reproof, of direction and comfort, may be given, as cases may require.

Too great familiarity breeds disrespect, if not contempt. A proper distance is to be observed between the steward and the other servants in the family; yet, by a prudent familiarity, and decent deportment, the gospel steward will endeavor to slide into the hearts of his fellow servants, and gain their esteem and confidence; that they may be encouraged, with freedom, to open their minds to him, and communicate their doubts, their trials, temptations and conflicts. This will give him opportunity to speak a word in season to him, who is weary. A word spoken in season, how good it is!—This is equally beneficial to the steward and his fellow servants. It is delightful to impart a spiritual gift. He who imparts, receives benefit by means of the mutual faith.\*

Good order and government are necessary to the well-being of a family. If the steward of God does not maintain regular discipline, impartially rebuke and warn the unruly, and administer the censures of the church to the unworthy, taking care not to give that which is holy unto dogs, the church will not flourish in truth, peace and holiness; but become lukewarm, merely formal, if not disorderly and impious.

The gospel steward is responsible to his Lord, for those things, the oversight of which is committed to him. He need therefore be watchful over the flock, and guard strictly against every thing, which may injure its peace and prosperity, or be hurtful to any of its members. The blessed truths of the gospel and precious souls are committed to his care. These are a sacred depositum which requires the most diligent keeping.

\* Romans i. 12.

The gospel steward must declare the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing which may be profitable to men. But the great and fundamental truths of christianity claim his chief attention and zeal. He is to preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified. He is to testify repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour; as the end of the law for righteousness, to all who believe. He is to show the nature, the importance, and necessity of regeneration, or newness of heart, as produced in the soul, by sovereign grace, and the victorious influences of the divine Spirit. The truth relating to these things, and those intimately connected with them, is to be earnestly contended for, and preached with plainness and energy, as "the food of our own souls, and of the souls of others; as the foundation on which we build for eternity." If these be neglected, or slightly handled, "our hope, our comfort, yea, our life is gone."

Being set for the defence of the gospel, the steward of God should teach those things, which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence; meekly instructing those who oppose themselves; and endeavouring to win them to the faith and obedience of Christ. From *this* he must not be deterred by the fear of man; but, putting his trust in the Lord, *feel himself safe* while illustrating and urging the essential truths of the gospel.

Whatever love and friendship they may have for those, who depart from the faith once delivered to the saints, the ministers of the word must not neglect to expose their errors, nor to withstand them in their attempts to draw away souls from the truth, as it is in Jesus. To yield to them, or suffer them to seduce the flock, is to betray the cause of Christ, and endanger the souls of men.

As it is the business of the steward of God, to direct and manage the affairs of his household, the church, he must be trusty and faithful; and, by his example, excite others to a strict performance of their duty. He must be an example to believers in all things; in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; making it his care to exemplify, in his own temper and deportment, every christian grace and virtue.

This leads us to consider,

Secondly, The blamelessness which should form the character of the gospel bishop. A bishop must be blameless.

Our context gives us a just, tho' brief, character of a blameless bishop. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly ;—not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre ; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men ; sober, just, temperate ; holding fast the faithful word, as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince gainsayers. This passage needs no comment. It plainly shows what should be the character of a gospel minister.

But it is needful to observe, that the steward of God, to be blameless, must be a man of knowledge, of piety, and an exemplary conversation.

1. He must be a man of knowledge, well informed in all those things, in which he is to instruct others ; holding fast the faithful word, as he has been taught.

A good acquaintance with the learned languages, and the several arts and sciences, is of much importance, and may be a great help, in the discharge of the duties of the evangelic ministry. The more extensive their knowledge is, the more capable are ministers of promoting the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world. But they ought to be particularly skilful in the word of righteousness, and to have a thorough acquaintance with the truths contained in the sacred scriptures. This knowledge should not be partial, but extend to the whole scheme of divine, revealed truth. The truths of christianity should be viewed, and understood, in their connection and mutual dependence ; and regarded according to their importance in the gospel plan. For if these be not understood, and well digested in the mind, ministers will not be able to give clear consistent and full instructions to their people.

A novice, one newly come to, or but little acquainted with the christian faith, is not qualified to be a blameless bishop. The knowledge and wisdom of age, are

not indeed to be expected from youth and inexperience ; but there ought to be such natural and acquired accomplishments, as are a good foundation for extensive improvement ; and such a desire of knowledge and of usefulness, as may afford a reasonable expectation, that the gifts already received, will not be neglected.

To the knowledge of the gospel should be joined the knowledge of human nature. The christian minister need be well acquainted with his own heart, and with the tempers, the dispositions and capacities of mankind. Unless the springs of human actions, and the influence of the passions, be well understood, the gospel bishop will not be able to address his hearers, with advantage and success ; nor to distinguish true religion from its various counterfeits.

2. The steward of God should be a man of piety ; He should have, not only the form, but the power of godliness.

He is to preach the gospel ; and to persuade men to believe and obey it ; but how can he do this with energy and success, if he does not himself firmly believe it, and has not felt its renewing and sanctifying influence ? If he does not know the worth of his own soul, nor feel the weight of eternal things—if he does not know the terrors of the Lord, nor the value of peace with him—if he has not seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin, nor felt his need of an almighty Saviour—if he has not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us—how can he, in an impressive manner, address his people, and beseech them to be converted, that their sins may be blotted out ?

True piety, or an heart deeply impressed with the truths of the gospel, and actuated by love to God and the Redeemer, is necessary to a good life ; or to the exercise of those graces, and the practice of those virtues, which adorn the steward of God. As is the heart, such will be the life and conversation.\*

3. The gospel bishop, to be blameless, must be circumspect and exemplary in his life and conversation. He should exhibit in his whole deportment, the benevo-

\* Matt. 7. 16, 17, 18.

lent spirit and temper of the gospel ; and all those virtues and graces which he recommends, and urges upon his people.

Abating unavoidable human infirmities, the character of christian ministers should be fair and unblemished. They should demean themselves, in so humble and modest, in so kind and friendly, in so holy, just and inoffensive a manner, as to have a good report of those who are without, and so as not to give just occasion to any to speak evil of them. A minister of a blameless character will, generally, be esteemed, and under great advantages to do good.

We are now to consider,

Thirdly, the importance of that blamelessness, which should form the character of the steward of God.

The design of the christian ministry is, to represent to the world the character of the living and true God, the reasonableness of his laws, and the excellence of pure and undefiled religion ; and to persuade men to love and practise it. Ministers are mediums through which the glory of God, of the Redeemer, and his truth, should shine for the illumination and comfort of mankind. For this reason they are called the glory of Christ.\* This being the design of the gospel ministry, it must be of high importance, that those who are in it, in doctrine show uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech which cannot be condemned ; and that their lives exemplify the doctrines they preach.

When unworthy characters get into the ministry, the honor of God and *his truth* suffer by them. The sons of Eli made offerings of the Lord to be abhorred. People are apt, although very improperly, to form their opinion of christianity, by the *temper and conduct* of its professors and ministers. How circumspect, how holy ought they then to be ?

It is necessary to his own peace and comfort here, as well as to his final welfare, that the gospel bishop be blameless. If he be not a man of true piety and strict virtue, he must, when attending on his ministry, act a forced part ; and he will have none of that satisfaction

\* 2 Cor. 8. 32.

and delight, which the pious and faithful steward feels, and which is a sweet and powerful incentive to duty. His work will be a task and burden to him. He will not esteem it his privilege and joy, to *preach the unsearchable riches of Christ*. And although he preach the gospel to others, he must himself finally be a cast-away. An awful consideration this ! Although he be hardened, and, generally, secure in his evil way, he will sometimes be appalled with the reproaches of his own heart, and the fearful expectation of judgement to come.

That a bishop be blameless, is necessary to the wise and faithful discharge of his duty. Unless he be pious and holy, he will have little inclination to duty, will but coldly attend to it, and be soon weary of it. He will not study how much *he can do*, to promote christian knowledge and holiness among his people ; but content himself with the formal performance of those offices which are indispensably necessary to retaining of his office, and securing its emoluments. He will not become all things to all men, like the apostle ; but rather, by improper conduct, and unguarded conversation, cause and strengthen prejudices against christianity ; and make the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Again,

It is of great importance to the success of the preached gospel, that ministers be men of knowledge, prudence and exemplary piety.

We may not confine the success of the gospel to the ministry of the truly pious. It is not the aim and intention of the preacher, but the Spirit of God, which gives efficacy to the word. Yet those who attend to this ministry, on truly christian principles, may reasonably expect to have the blessing of heaven attending their exertions for the salvation of souls. It is most likely God will, and ordinarily doth, put this honor on such ; and doubtless, the converted, is, most generally, the converting ministry.”

How worthy, how happy those ministers, who can with truth say ; we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard, which we have looked upon and handled, of the word of life ?\*—Who so approve

\* Acts iv. 20. and 1. John i. 1.

themselves in the sight of God and man, that they can address their people in the language of the apostle. Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ.† “Conscious integrity will inspire them with courage, in the discharge of their duty, and their upright behaviour gives them an hopeful prospect of having many followers.”

Example has certainly a very powerful influence. Altho' a minister preach ever so well, if his life be ill, he cannot expect much success. As his life contradicts his doctrine, his hearers will justly scruple his sincerity, and be in no fit temper to receive his counsels. But if *he live, as he teaches others to live*, they will not only believe what he says, but, allured by his example, be followers of him in faith and holiness.

#### APPLICATION.

1. We may infer from what has been observed, that those, who think of entering into the gospel ministry, ought to look well to the state of their own souls and to look well to the state of their piety, and actuated by christian motives. One has justly observed. “That it is an awful thing for any to take upon himself an office, which has so near a connection with the glory of God, and the salvation of immortal souls, without a qualification, so necessary to a right and faithful discharge of it. A qualification, which only can sanctify his other gifts; destitute of which he is likely to apply them in such manner, as to hurt the interests of the gospel, and inflame the displeasure of God against sin, who is infinitely jealous of his glory.”

2. We may remark, that great care ought to be taken in introducing persons into the sacred ministry; that none but those of a good character, for knowledge, prudence and piety, be separated to this work.

We are not indeed to look for perfection, nor to judge the hearts of men. We must form our opinion, from their apparent abilities, and from their general temper and deportment; judging charitably, and making all proper allowances for human frailties. While we act upon such principles as these, we cannot be too cautious. The divine direction is; Lay hands suddenly on

no man. Let churches look out, and chuse, for pastors, men of knowledge, piety, and good report ; and let ministers commit the gospel-treasure to faithful men, who shall be disposed and able to teach others.

3. Is blamelessness so necessary in a christian bishop, may we not then exclaim ; Who is sufficient for these things ;--Who is that faithful and wise steward, who diligently attends his duty, and gives to every one, committed to his charge, his portion of meat, in due season ?

I trust, my brethren in the gospel ministry, that we are conscious to ourselves, that it is our desire and endeavour to be found faithful. Yet are we not sensible that our neglect and failings are many ? that we do not, with becoming care, life and energy, address ourselves to the several branches of our duty, as servants and stewards in the family of God ?—Are we not apt to be lukewarm and slothful ?—Have we not too little zeal for God, and his truths ; and too little concern for the salvation of immortal souls ? Let us humbly repent of our neglect—make daily application to the blood of sprinkling ; which was shed for the priesthood, as well as for the congregation :—and renew our diligence and activity, in a steady dependance on divine aids.

But it is time to make the addresses usual on such occasions as this.

I first turn myself to you, Dear Sir, who art presently to be ordained a gospel bishop, and appointed a steward, in this part of our Lord's Family.

You have a near, a most interesting concern in all the transactions of this day—The truths, which have been brought up to view, demand *your particular, your serious and solemn consideration*. For, as the steward of God, you are to have the oversight of this flock, to deal out to them the provision of his household, and give every one his portion.

We charitably believe you have seriously considered, what *your heart, your life, and your conversation* ought to be ; and that upon christian principles you are disposed to give yourself to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Had I not this persuasion concerning you, you would not have seen me in this desk to-day.

As the steward of God, it concerns you to be faithful. Avoid sloth and negligence—You are to watch for souls. If you know the worth of your own soul, you will feel an affectionate concern for the welfare of the souls of others ; and exert yourself to persuade men to repent and believe the gospel, that they may be saved in the day of the Lord. For this purpose, you will preach the word, that system of truth contained in the holy scripture. You will derive your religious sentiments from the Bible and inculcate them upon your people.

We may not prescribe to you the doctrines you are to teach ; yet we may observe ; That while you display the reasonableness, the holiness, and eternal obligation of the moral law, you will endeavor to do it, in such manner, as may convince men that they have transgressed it, and are under its curse ; and you will direct and exhort them to believe in the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made a curse for us, has made atonement for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, for the justification of those, who repent and believe in Him. And while you direct your hearers, to build their eternal hopes on Jesus Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, you will teach their obligations to continue in the love of God and to maintain good works, that they may be to the praise and glory of his grace.

That you may be instrumental in saving souls, you must make *this* your constant desire and aim—For *this* you must study and meditate—For *this* you must pray and preach.

Your work, Dear Sir, is great and arduous. You must expect to meet with difficulties and discouragements in the performance of it. You enter the vineyard in a dark and trying time—But be not disheartened : Stand fast in the faith ; quit yourself like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The grace of Christ is sufficient for you.

There are many motives to excite you to diligence and fidelity, in your stewardship. You serve a good master—you are not your own, but his, and must be wholly for him. In this place are you to serve him in the gospel—all your abilities and gifts are the church's, by your own consent. It will be sacrilege in you to convert them to any other service ; interfering with this. If you are faithful, your Lord will grant you success here, and finally, give you a crown of glory.

You had, as you have told us, at an early period of your life, a desire to devote yourself to the ministry of the word—This desire increased with your years—you consecrated the first earnings of your labor to the acquirement of the knowledge, requisite to qualify you for the sacred employment—Providence has succeeded your endeavors—you have chosen the christian ministry in preference to all other professions, and, behold, now a *great door* is opened for your entrance upon the office of a bishop, in the church of Christ.

If your desire of this good work originated in gospel principles ; and if you have been actuated by gospel motives, in seeking preparation to minister in the sanctuary, you will cordially thank God, who has led you in the way ; you will consecrate all your powers

and acquirements to his service, and will render unto him, and to his people, according to his rich benefits to you—you will cheerfully abound in this work of the Lord, that you may feed the flock of God ; and you will yourself daily feed on the bread of life, that you may be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

I shall leave with you the advice of the aged and venerable Mr. Walter of Roxbury, given to a young minister,\* soon after entering on the pastoral office, and which was given to me by that minister, on the day when I was consecrated to this good work : It is this, “Preach Christ, live upon Christ, and live to Christ.” If this you do, you will be a blameless bishop ; and a faithful steward in the household of God ; and finally receive the approbation of your Lord. Dear Sir, may the grace of Christ be with your spirit.

I would now turn myself to the respectable christian church and society in this place.

Beloved in the Lord, it would have been a circumstance highly agreeable ; and have greatly increased the joy of this day, had some worthy members, of this church and society, been cordially united with their brethren in the choice they have made of a pastor. In dissenting from their brethren and fellow-citizens, we persuade ourselves, they have acted conscientiously, and had in view the interest of religion and piety. Candour obliges them to have the same favourable opinion of their brethren, who differ from them in this matter. We trust, that altho’ the pastor-elect is not their choice, they will preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and abide with the church, continuing stedfastly in the doctrine and fellowship of the gospel ; of a disposition to do which, we are happy to see, as we conceive, a pleasing token at this time ; and they will treat the pastor with respect and tenderness, as *one* who worketh the work of the Lord ; teaching and inculcating the essential truths of christianity, and walking with them in the way of peace and holiness. We persuade ourselves also, that their brethren will be candid and tender towards them ; behaving in so conciliating and christian-like manner, as to give clear evidence, that they love the truth, and are of the same mind, in every thing most important.

Brethren, It becomes you all, to consider the particular circumstances of this society ; to thank God there is so general an agreement among you ; and to study the things which make for peace, truth and holiness ; and whereby one may edify another. If you do this, the God of peace will be with and bless you.

Dear Brethren, Your pastor, as the steward of God, is to deal out provision for his household ; to feed you with the word of truth. In *this* there is a rich variety, adapted to the different states, and the various necessities of souls. There is milk for babes, for those who are young in knowledge and christian experience ; and strong meat for men, for those who have made advances in the christian life. There is a word of instruction for the ignorant ; of reproof for those who go astray ; and of correction for those who offend.

\* The late venerable John Swift of Acton.

There is a word of direction for those who ask what they shall do to be saved—of pardon and peace for the humble and penitent ; and of support and comfort, for the sorrowful, the afflicted and the tempted. It will not be sufficient that the steward dispense to you this provision.. You must *receive it, feed upon it, and digest it well* ; or it will not nourish and support you. Your minds must be open to instruction and reproof. You must receive and obey the truth in love. The word preached will not profit, if it be not mixed with faith, in them who hear it.\*

Ever esteem your pastor highly in love for his works' sake. His work is great and laborious. He will always need your support and assistance in it. Help him by your daily fervent prayers. By *prayer* help him to study, to preach, and to converse with you on the things of God, and the concerns of your souls. Your prayers for him will return with redoubled blessings on your own heads. Remember he is but a man, and of like passions with you—bear with his infirmities and faults—let him be with you without fear.

May the work of the Lord appear unto you his servants, and his glory unto your children. May the beauty of the Lord our God be always upon you.

Beloved, we commend you and your pastor to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them who are sanctified.

This numerous and respectable assembly claim our notice.

Friends, let us bear in mind, that we are all servants, and, in some sense, stewards in the family of God on earth ; who will soon call us to account for the talents entrusted to us. Long have we been in the Lord's vineyard ; he has been expecting in us the fruit of holiness. Have we borne this fruit ? Alas ! how barren and unfruitful have we been ! Let us repent, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance.

The scenes are shifting—time spends—judgment approaches—*Eternity* ! “ awful, pleasing thought ! ” *Eternity* will soon open to our full view : How shall we then stand before God ? May we know Jesus Christ, and him crucified ; and may we be found in him ; then his appearance will be to complete our salvation. AMEN.

\* Heb. iv. 2

The Congregational church of Christ in Hardwick, was embodied November 17, 1735, and the same day, the Rev. Thomas White, the first pastor was ordained. Mr. White died January 6, 1784, in the 74th year of his age, and the 48th of his ministry.

Their second pastor, the Rev. Thomas Holt, was ordained June 25, 1789.

According to mutual agreement, and the advice of an ecclesiastical council, the pastoral relation of Mr. Holt to his church and people, was dissolved March 27, 1805.

